

MUSIC & RESEARCH

By

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The knowledge of ancient science of *Raga* based on *Murchchanas* is an extremely important asset. Whereas on the one hand this knowledge will enable us to compare the prevailing forms of music with the ancient forms, on the other hand, it will make clear to us many realities—such as our influence on foreign music and vice versa.

The countries that are indebted for a major part of their cultural wealth to culturally rich countries like Greece, will hesitate to give credit to India for originality in any branch of science. Scholars of such countries have been constantly at pains to prove in their own way the indebtedness of India to other countries for her wealth of knowledge. During the foreign rule, we too had ignored the original sources, and had blindly repeated the opinions of foreigners. It is, therefore, necessary for the thinkers of free India to have a clearer understanding if they have to discriminate the grain from the chaff. It is unwise and ungrateful not to acknowledge one's debts to others. At the same time it is not proper to feel crushed under the weight of imaginary debts to others and thus fall from one's own and also other's esteem.

Questions in Minds of Scholars

If there could be a *Prabandh* in olden times without the *Shadaja* and the *Panchami* why can't there be one now? If the *Shadaja* and the *Pancham* were not unavoidable in ancient music why is it now? If the *Madhyam Swara* was then inseparable and constant why not now? When in ancient times the *Trishruti-Pancham* was happily and aesthetically used why is it not possible now? When the *Gramabheda* and the *Murchchana* were clear and universally used earlier why can't they be clarified today? These are the questions that rise in the minds of scholars.

Some people say that due to lack of continuity in tradition it is difficult to understand the essence of ancient *Shastras*. But the *Sutras* are complete in themselves and their meaning

is doubtless. The musicologists who are well-versed in the language in which the *Sutras* are written must be able to explain them. There are quite a few people who blame not only the ancient thinkers for their inability to explain things clearly, but question the *Sanskrit* language as an effective medium for expression of such serious subjects. How can we believe that music cannot be properly interpreted in a language in which abstruse and difficult subjects like grammar, logic, philosophy, astronomy, and mathematics have been minutely discussed.

Persons Enriching Music

As a matter of fact, the main tendency of authors of works on music, written during the last six centuries has been to put together well-defined rules of music prevailing at the time. There were two types of persons who enriched the store of music:

- (a) Those who knew the theory and were expert practical exponents. While keeping alive the theory of music, they found ever new nuances and new permutations and combinations of the *Swaras* and, thus created a special literature of music. They were experts in several *Shastras* and were known as "*Vaggeykars*".
- (b) There were others who continuously practised the *Vaggeykars* and acquired mastery over them and then performed before the public. It is evident that the main task of *Acharyas* was considered to be training of good students, and in fact their merit was judged from this point of view. This is evident from the criterion used for comparing the two *Acharyas* in the celebrated drama "*Malavikagnimitram*" of Kalidasa.

We have sufficient proof to believe that the well known scholar of *Shaivism* and the commentator of *Natya Shastra*, Acharya Abhinav Gupta, used to give lessons to Veena players.

The great poet Jaidev who preferred to call himself Poet-composer comes in the same category.

Rasas

The perception of *rasas* has been compared with the state of spiritual bliss, of unity with Brahma. The conception of the '*rasas*' and the process of their revelation is a gift of Indian thinkers to the world. If one attentively listens to a special arrangement of *svaras* one feels transported to that sublime state. The *Naad* equally influences a child and an agile deer. Our ancestors have given serious thought to the mutual relation between a particular arrangement of *svaras* and *rasas*. For various reasons it has become necessary to re-analyse this relation today. An analysis and clarification of the *Ragashastra* based on the *Murchhanas* will be helpful in understanding this relation. Such a study will result in our getting an opportunity to listen to many *ragas* that are not in vogue now and also enable us to understand and classify the present-day *ragas* into those governed by the *Rasa* or the *Bhava*.

The present-day musicians are either exponents or teachers. They have not enough time to conduct research in music. If the exponent does not give sufficient attention to the mastery of existing type of music he will neither earn fame nor a living. If a music teacher does not learn and teach the prescribed *ragas* according to the current trends he too will not be able to earn a living. Therefore, research in music becomes the task of those who are free from worries of a livelihood or those who have other means of earning and can devote their life for research.

Research Workers in Music

Not all non-professional musicians are capable of undertaking this task. As far as possible research workers in music must be well-versed in the theories of the ancient *Vaggeykars*. They must also be generous, self-confident, devoted and above all, inspired by a thirst for knowledge. They should be free from all parochial considerations of any particular tradition. I do not mean to say that no thought has been given to the study of ancient music in this age. But the main theme of present-day research has been to find out the consistency of various technical terms in music by persons equipped with only an etymological understanding of those technical terms

Though it is not improper to study the theory of sound with the help of modern physics yet the primary duty of a student of Indian music is to analyse the process by which our ancient thinkers acquired correct knowledge of this science. Like the technical terms pertaining to other sciences the terms used in the science of music are symbolic and self explanatory. Knowing this fact is the essence of problem. It is the key to the understanding of ancient *Shastras*. Technical terms of music have been the subject of wild guesses in recent times. This has led to many wrong understandings.

As a matter of fact, the vast literature created by scholars like Acharya Abhinav Gupta will show that though possessing a mastery over the theory and practice of music, the authors of such works were unable to devote 8 to 10 hours a day for practising music. The *Vaggeykars* with their practical knowledge introduced ever new compositions of the *Svaras*, and kept the traditional secrets alive in an authentic manner. They trained new singers, instrumentalists and dancers on the basis of ancient tradition. These trainees were the *Sadhaks* who by the constant *sadhana* presented a perfected piece to the people. Thus the *Vaggeykars* and the practical exponents were mutually complementary. The main task of *Vaggeykars* was thinking and that of the *Sadhaks* the practical exposition.

Shifting of Indian Scholars

During the invasion of Mahmood Ghaznavi the Indian scholars shifted to places beyond the reach of the invaders. Alberuni has given a clear account of this fact. For this very reason Kashmir, which was the centre of learning, was denuded of great scholars. Towards the end of the 12th Century, when Mohammad Ghori invaded North India scholars drifted away from one more centre of learning, Kanauj. The permanent occupation of Delhi by Muslim rulers compelled scholars to go towards South. When Malik Kafoor, Commander-in-Chief of Alaudin Khilji, invaded the South he captured thousands of scholars and sent them to Delhi. At that time many of them destroyed their works and many pretended to be fools and others dumb.

During this period lived Amir Khusro, an able statesman, a scholar of Persian music and a lover of Indian music. He was acquainted with the form of music prevalent in and around Delhi, but for want of contact with the *Vaggy-*

kars of the land he did not know the *Murchchana* system. He used to organise discussions between the musicians trained in Iran and the Indian artists who were available to him. But he could not understand the Indian system of classification of *ragas*. Probably for this very reason he wanted Malik Kafoor to capture and send Indian musicians to Delhi from South.

The Indian musicologists could not possibly be pleased with this action of Amir Khusro. After all the knowledge cannot be extorted by force. Gopal Nayak on account of his simplicity was caught in the snares of Amir Khusro in spite of the warning of his Guru Baiju. We have got a few *Dhrupads* to prove this fact.

Classification of Indian Ragas

At last Amir Khusro classified the known Indian *ragas* according to the Persian '*Muquam*' system. In the Iranian stringed instruments there were 12 *sarikas* in one *Saptak*. They called them *Pardas*. Even today Muslim artistes call the "*Sundri*" of Sitar and keys of harmonium as "*Pardas*". Out of those twelve constant *Pardas* the ones used in a particular *raga* were called "*Muquam*". This classification of *ragas* was later called '*Indraprastha System*'. Scholars like Loc'han called the '*Muquam*' system as '*Sansthan* system.

When this system came into being, Indian names were given to the sounds that emanated from these twelve constant *Pardas*. Due to this admixture of the Iranian system with Indian names there came into being two places for '*Rishab*' and '*Dhaivat*' whereas according to the *Murchchana* system these two sounds were fixed in their places. Similarly, the '*Shadaja*' and the '*Pancham*' became fixed sounds whereas according to the *Murchchana* system they were not. Apart from these, other *svaras* also assumed two forms. According to the *Murchchana* system every *svara* could become a basic *svara* with the result that it was possible to drop the '*Shadaja*' and the '*Pancham*' in some *ragas*. According to the new system the name '*Basic Svara*' instead of becoming indicative of any special position, became the substitute for the '*Shadaja*'. The *Sarikas* of Indian *Kinnaris* ceased to reverberate according to the *Murchchana* system while the Veena succumbed to the '*Muquam*' system of the Islamic tradition.

Because of this, the existence of only twelve *svaras* were accepted for a particular *Sthan* of *Mandra*, *Madhya*, *Tar*, whereas when the '*Shadaja grama*' of the *Shudh Murchchana* were basic in different *svaras* we had 20 sounds between two *Sthans*. The following table will give a broad idea of this :—

Basic

Svara	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	Murchchana
Sa		re		ga				ma				pa			dha						sa		Shadajadi
Re		ga			ma				pa			dha			ni			sa			re		Rishabhadi
Ga			ma				pa				dha	ni				sa		re		ga			Gandhardi
Ma				pa		dha	ni	dha	ni	sa					re		ga			ma			Madhyamadi
Pa			dha		ni		sa		re		ga						ma				pa		Panchamadi
Dha		ni			sa		re		ga				ma					pa		dha			Dhaivatadi
Ni			sa		re		ga				ma					pa		dha		ni			Nishadadi.

Shruti Numericals

In the above mentioned table the indication of the *Shruti* numericals is meant for showing the distance of the terminal *svaras* rather than the basic *svaras* of the different *Murchchanas*. A careful observation will show that there is no sound (*Dhvani*) on the basic (*adhar*) *svara* of 1 and the *Shruti* of 21. On all other *Shrutis* we have a sound (*dhvani*) on one or other *Murchchanas*. This means that it is only the pure *Murchchana* of the *Shadajagram* that gives us twenty sounds beginning from its basic

svara to its terminal position, and these sounds are all pure sounds of the *Shadajagram*. All *Shrutis* are not equal. Therefore, a careful study will reveal that more than twenty sounds can be obtained from these *Murchchanas*. If we take into consideration all the *Vikrit Murchchanas* of the *Shadajagram* and the four types of *Murchchanas* of the *Madhyagram* we will have more sounds within the limit of a particular position.

The *Mela* system which is based on the *Muquam* system does not contain many of the

dhvani of the *Murchchana* cycle. It is not possible in it to have a *svara* within the distance of 10 or 12 *shrutis* from the basic *svara*, whereas, in the above-mentioned *Rishabh* and *Pancham Murchchanas* it is possible. In the *Mela* system, at a distance of 13 *shrutis* after basic *svara*, it is essential to have a sound *pancham*, whereas in the above mentioned *Dhaivat Murchchanas* no sound exists beyond 13 *Shrutis* after basic *svara*. The *Dhaivat Murchchana* does not come in any *Mela* system.

Object of Analysis

The object of this analysis is to draw the attention of the readers to the discrepancy in our knowledge caused by the disappearance of the *Murchchana* system.

The combination of sounds *dhvani* is the framework or the body of a *raga* and not its soul. Our analysis so far has been of this framework. Let us now take into consideration its soul—the *Bhava*.

According to the ancients, the starting *svara* of a *Murchchana* determined the *rasa* of the *raga*, such as : the *ragas* of the *Shadaja* and the *Rishabh Murchchana* mainly deal with *Vir*, *Adbhut* and *Roudra rasas* and those based on the *Madhyam* and the *Pancham Murchchanas* deal with '*Shringara*' and '*Hasya*' and those of the *Gandhara* and the '*Nishad*' *Murchchanas* deal with *Karun rasa* and those of the *Dhaivat Murchchanas* deal with *Vibhatsa*. In these *ragas* there is a predominance of the *svaras* expressing the *Sanchari bhavas* that are sympathetic to the main *rasa* and a total absence or the least use of the *svaras* that are against it.

Due to lack of understanding, the basic *svara* of the *Murchchanas* is called the *Shadaja* in the *Mela* system with the consequent changes in the names of other *svaras* of the same *Murchchana*. Therefore, there is no connection between the meaning of these terms and the sound they are made to represent. That is why books dealing with *ragas* according to the *Mela* system are silent on the subject of the relation between the *raga* and the *rasa*.

Svaras

The deities of the *svaras*, their colour, their visual forms, *dhyan*, etc., are related to the *bhava* content. In rhetoric science, colours have been prescribed to give visual forms to the

rasas. A mathematical evaluation of the *svaras* may take us upto the fringe of the *ragas* but mathematics is incapable of leading us to their *rasa* content.

The above mentioned facts pose the following questions before a student of this science today :—

- (a) Is it possible to analyse and practise the ancient *gramas*, *svaras* or *shrutis*?
- (b) Is it possible to analyse the *rasa* theory as described in musicology?
- (c) Can the modern singers and instrumentalists render the ancient *ragas* with ease?
- (d) Is the *Murchchana* system more scientific, complete and simple than the *Mela* system?
- (e) Can the influence of our *Murchchana* system on foreign countries be proved?
- (f) Will present day music be invigorated by the popularization of the *Murchchana* system?
- (g) Is it possible to interpret the modern *ragas* according to their *bhava* content?

My answer to all these questions is in the affirmative.

Years ago my intimate friend Shri Bhishma Dev Vedi had demonstrated all the 22 *shrutis* and also a few *jatis* on instruments at the Seminars organised by the All India Radio and also by Sur Singar Sansad.

Shri Fahimuddin Khan, son of my friend Shri Rahimuddin Khan Dagar, had demonstrated under my direction several *jatis* in Lucknow in the presence of many musicians.

Shri Ghulam Mustafa Khan, disciple and relative of Shri Nisar Hussain Khan, who has been receiving training in ancient music under me for 1½ years, has sung *Jati Gan* for hours together before eminent musicians and connoisseurs in Lucknow, Rampur and Delhi, and had received wide appreciation.

In conclusion I hope that the connoisseurs of music will give deep thought to this question. It will be a matter of pride for our country if we are able to remove the wrongly attributed stigma of unintelligibility from our ancient literature.